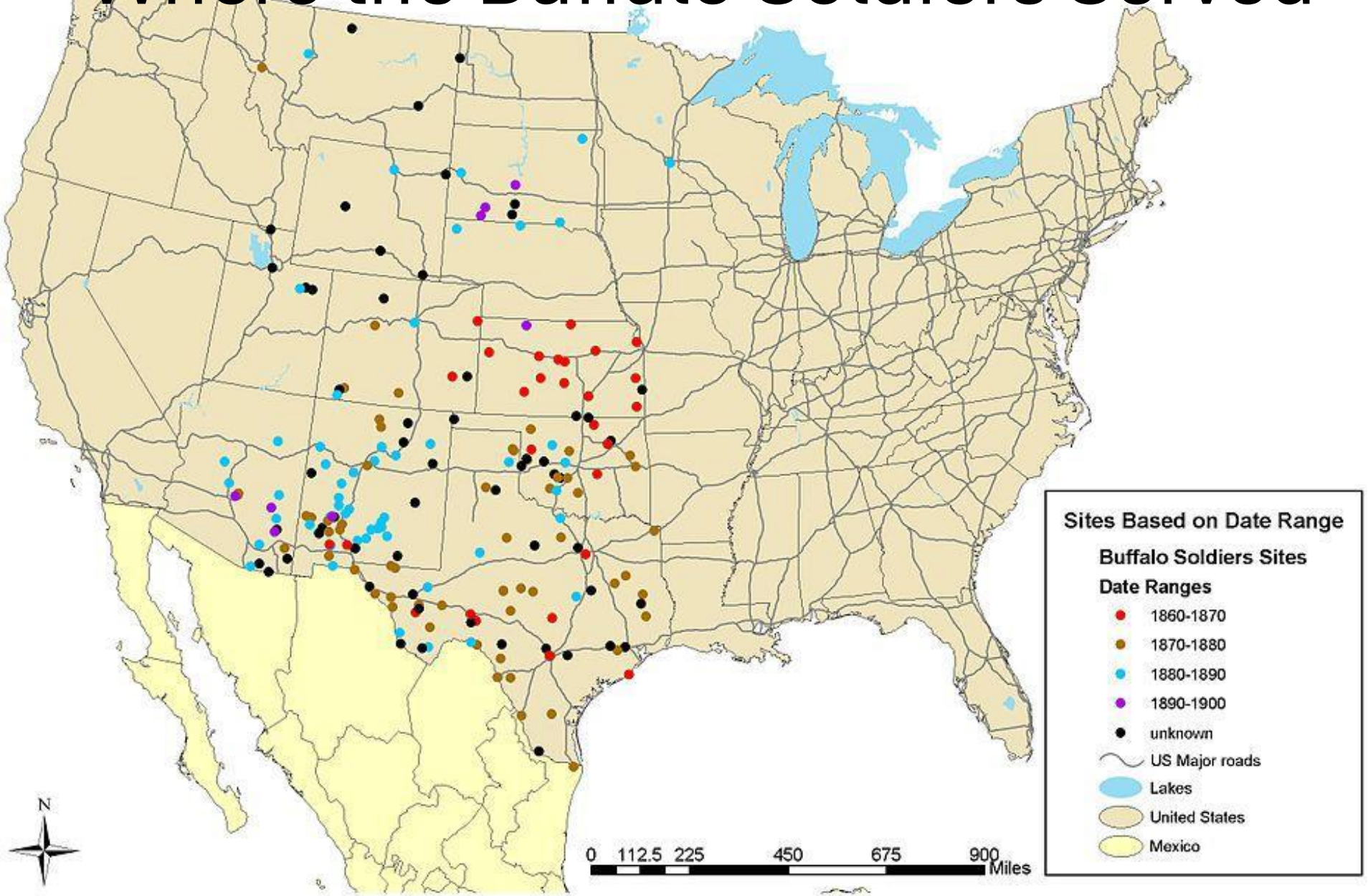
Buffalo Soldiers 1866-1951

Buffalo Soldiers – A term coined for those African-Americans who served with the US Army after the Civil War. The term “Buffalo Soldiers” has been attributed to several sources for the units formed after 1866 by an act of Congress.

- Originally Congress reorganized the Army after the Civil War and created two “Black” Calvary Units (9th and10th U.S. Cavalry) and four Infantry Regiments (the 38th, 39th, 40th, and 41st Infantry Regiments (Colored)). (The 38th and 41st were reorganized as the 25th Infantry Regiment, with headquarters in Jackson Barracks in New Orleans, Louisiana, in November 1869. The 39th and 40th were reorganized as the 24th Infantry Regiment, with headquarters at Fort Clark, Texas, in April 1869. [Wikipedia])
- It is the 9th & 10th Calvary and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiments best known for fighting in the West against the Indian Tribes.
- **19 Buffalo Soldiers received the Medal of Honor during the Indian Wars.**

Where the Buffalo Soldiers Served



According to the Buffalo Soldiers National Museum, the name originated with the Cheyenne warriors in the winter of 1877, the actual Cheyenne translation being "Wild Buffalo". However, writer Walter Hill documented the account of Colonel Benjamin Grierson, who founded the 10th Cavalry regiment, recalling an 1871 campaign against the Comanche. Hill attributed the origin of the name to the Comanche due to Grierson's assertions. The Apache used the same term ("We called them 'buffalo soldiers', because they had curly, kinky hair ... like bisons") a claim supported by other sources. Some sources assert that the nickname was given out of respect for the fierce fighting ability of the 10th Cavalry. Still other sources point to a combination of both legends. The term Buffalo Soldiers became a generic term for all black soldiers. It is now used for U.S. Army units that trace their direct lineage back to the 9th and 10th Cavalry units whose service earned them an honored place in U.S. history.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_Soldier

Buffalo Soldiers in New Mexico

Over 4000 Buffalo Soldiers served in the New Mexico Territory in 11 army posts.

Mostly in the South-Central part of the Territory patrolling and protecting established trade routes and travelers. Notable posts were Fort Stanton near Capitan, Fort McRae near Elephant Butte Lake, and Fort Selden, just north of Las Cruces.

Several key battles for control of New Mexico took place in the areas we live and work. One of the most significant occurred on April 8, 1880, when the 9th Cavalry engaged Apache Chief Victorio at a watering hole in Hembrillo Canyon-located on what today is the west side of White Sands Missile Range, near Victorio Peak.

Numerous other skirmishes took place in Alamo Canyon (near today's Alamogordo) and the Sacramento Mountains. Campaigns in the mountains proved difficult for the Buffalo Soldiers. One venture into Dog Canyon demonstrated the danger faced by the cavalry as the Army was greeted by Apaches firing on them and dropping large rocks from 800 feet above. In the searing summer heat, the Buffalo Soldiers scaled the steep canyon walls, with several men suffering heatstroke. Reaching the ledge at nightfall, the soldiers discovered the Apaches were long gone.

https://www.holloman.af.mil/Article-Display/Article/318164/buffalo-soldiers-african-american-soldiers-who-fought-for-control-of-new-mexico/

Buffalo Soldiers in New Mexico

The 9th U.S. Cavalry was transferred from Texas to New Mexico in 1876. The 12 troops or companies of the regiment were parceled out to various New Mexico forts, including Fort Union.

After arriving at Fort Union, the Buffalo Soldiers were used to keep the peace. Long-running disputes between heavily armed residents, known locally as the Colfax County Wars and the Lincoln County Wars, threatened anarchy in parts of New Mexcio. Despite prejudice from some of the locals, the Buffalo Soldiers helped keep the peace among warring factions.

Typically, like at all other posts, when not out in the field, soldiers were there to perform “Fatigue Duty” like chopping wood, repairing bridges and roads, building new facilities. At Fort Union, the Buffalo Soldiers also installed indoor plumbing and built the sidewalks still visible today.

The regimental band also accompanied the 9th Calvary and was in great demand at ceremonies and dances.

https://www.nps.gov/foun/learn/historyculture/buffalo-soldiers.htm

Private William Cathay

There are no known images of Private William Cathay. NPS drawing by Mary Feitz. (Served 1866-1868)

https://www.nps.gov/foun/learn/historyculture/william-cathay.htm

https://www.nmvetsmemorial.org/buffalo-soldier-monument.html

Enlisted in the 38th US Infantry, Company A in St. Louis, later as a Buffalo Soldier. An ex-slave who seized the opportunity to join the US Army and proudly wear the Army uniform.

Spent a lot of time in the hospital dealing with smallpox and other ailments. Stationed at Fort Union, Fort Cummings and Fort Bayard.

It was at Fort Bayard hospital for another ailment, Private Cathay was discovered to be a woman. Her name was Cathy Williams.

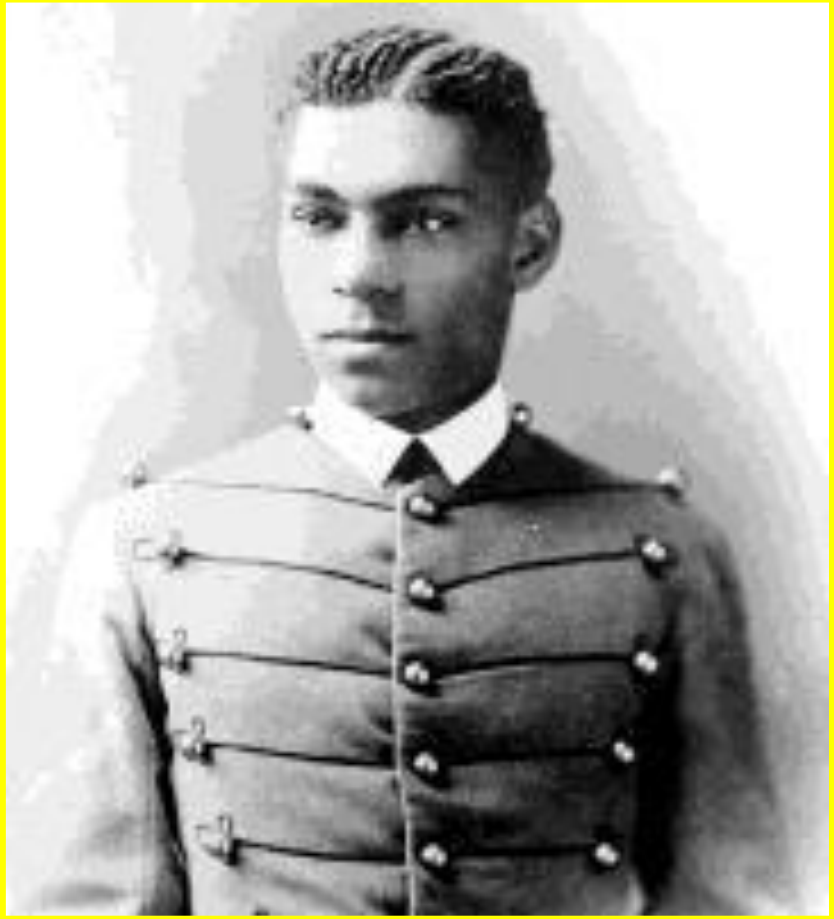
Although discharged in 1868 for “feeble habit. He is continually on sick report”, no paperwork mentioned gender.

After her discharge, she worked as a cook at Fort Union. After leaving Fort Union, she would work as a cook and laundress around the region.

She said, "I wanted to make my own living and not be dependent on relations or friends.“

She died sometime in 1892 in Trinidad, Colorado. Her gravesite is unknown.

Notable Officers of the Buffalo Soldiers



Henry O. Flipper, first black graduate of West Point. He was assigned to A Troop, 10th Calvary where he served with distinction and honor. He was an American soldier, former slave, and the first African American to graduate from the United States Military Academy at West Point in 1877, earning a commission as a 2nd lieutenant in the US Army. Unsubstantiated rumors led to his court martial and dismissal from the Army in 1882.

Henry O. Flipper

After losing his commission in the Army, Flipper worked throughout Mexico and Latin America and as an assistant to the Secretary of the Interior. He retired to Atlanta in 1931 and died of natural causes in 1940. In 1994, his descendants applied to the US military for a review of Flipper's court martial and dismissal. A review found the conviction and punishment were "unduly harsh and unjust" and recommended Flipper's dismissal to be changed to a good conduct discharge. Shortly afterwards, an application for pardon was filed with the Secretary of the Army, which was forwarded to the Department of Justice. President Bill Clinton pardoned Lieutenant Henry O. Flipper on February 19, 1999.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henry_Ossian_Flipper

Notable Officers of the Buffalo Soldiers

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Charles_Young_(United_States_Army_officer)

- Charles Young, third black graduate of West Point. (see National Park Service) He was the first black U.S. national park superintendent, first black military attaché, first black man to achieve the rank of colonel, and highest-ranking black officer in the Regular Army until his death in 1922.
- In 2022, in recognition of his exemplary service and the barriers he faced due to racism, he was posthumously promoted to brigadier general, and a promotion ceremony was held in his honor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point.[2]

Notable Officers of the Buffalo Soldiers

Benjamin Grierson, first commander of the 10th Calvary. He was a music teacher, then a career officer in the United States Army serving in the Civil War. After the war he organized and led the Buffalo Soldiers of the 10th Cavalry Regiment from 1866 to 1890.

Notable Officers of the Buffalo Soldiers

Edward Hatch, first commander of the 9th Calvary. He was a career American soldier who served as a general in the Union Army during the American Civil War. By the end of the Civil War, he held the rank of brevet lieutenant colonel, colonel of volunteers and also received a commission to first lieutenant in the Regular United States Army. After the war he took the rank of Colonel and became the first commander of the 9th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, a Buffalo soldier regiment with African-American troops commanded by white officers

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edward_Hatch

Notable Officers of the Buffalo Soldiers

John J “Black Jack” Pershing - General of the Armies John J. Pershing is a controversial figure regarding the Buffalo Soldiers. He served with the 10th Cavalry from October 1895 to May 1897. He served again with them for less than six months in Cuba. Because he saw the Buffalo Soldiers as good soldiers, he was looked down upon and called "Nigger Jack" by White cadets and officers at West Point. Only later during the Spanish–American War did the press change that insulting term to "Black Jack". During World War I, Pershing bowed to the racial policies of President Woodrow Wilson, Secretary of War Newton D. Baker, and the southern Democratic Party with its "separate but equal" philosophy. For the first time in American history, Pershing allowed American soldiers (African Americans) to be under the command of a foreign power (France).

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/John_J._Pershing

Medal of Honor Recipients

Of the 3,525 Medals of Honor awarded as of March 2023, 95 have been awarded to 94 different African-American recipients. Robert Augustus Sweeney is one of 19 men, and the only African American, to have been awarded two Medals of Honor.

Serving on board the U.S.S. *Kearsarge*, at Hampton Roads, Va., 26 October 1881, Sweeney jumped overboard and assisted in saving from drowning a shipmate who had fallen overboard into a strongly running tide.

Serving on board the U.S.S. *Jamestown*, at the Navy Yard New York, 20 December 1883, Sweeney rescued from drowning A. A. George, who had fallen overboard from that vessel.[4]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Robert_Augustus_Sweeney

SERGEANT JOHN DENNY,(1846-1901)

9TH U.S. CAVALRY

Earned His Citation on September 18, 1879

Earned at Las Animas Canyon, New Mexico Against Apache Chief Victorio

Citation reads, "Removed a Wounded Comrade, Under Fire, to a place of Safety"

Took Fifteen Years Before He Was Recognized for His Bravery

Denny Remained in the Army Until 1897

John Denny is buried at Soldier's Home National Cemetery in Washington, D.C.

Medal of Honor Recipients Indian Campaigns

https://www.cmohs.org/news-events/history/the-indian-campaigns-honoring-african-american-heroes/

https://www.yocumblackhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PPT-Buffalo-Soldiers-Medal-of-Honor-Recipients.pdf

CORPORAL ISAIAH MAYS, (1858-1925)
24TH U.S. INFANTRY

Earned Medal of Honor on February 18, 1890

Served as Part of Escort for Major Wham, Paymaster, U.S. Army

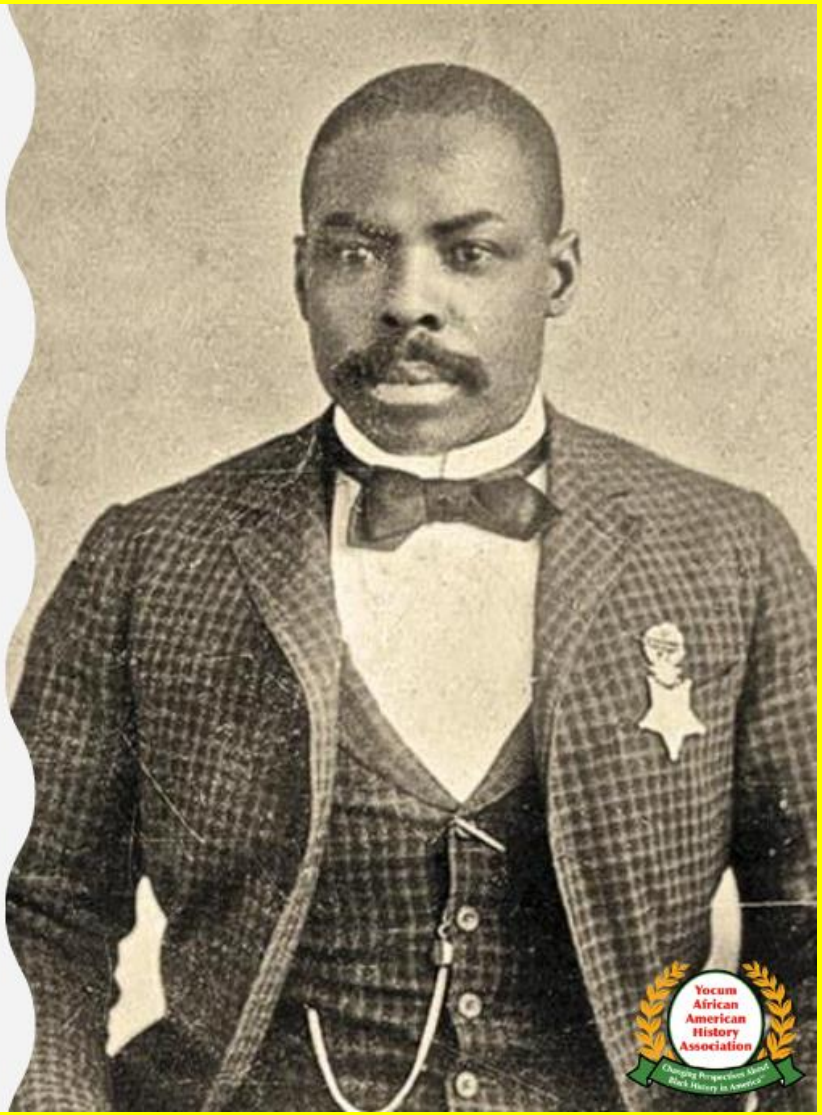
Robbers Ambushed Paymaster Escort for Payroll of $38,345.10

Many in the Escort Were Wounded

Corporal Mays Eventually Went for Help, Traveling Two Miles

The Band of Robbers Were Eventually Successful Gaining the Payroll

Corporal Mays Received the Medal of Honor for his Bravery Under Fire



https://www.yocumblackhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PPT-Buffalo-Soldiers-Medal-of-Honor-Recipients.pdf

Nineteen Buffalo Soldiers awarded the Medal of Honor for their honor and bravery

Sergeant Thomas Boyne	Fought bravely at Cuchillo Negro River near Ojo.
Sergeant Benjamin Brown	Wounded in conflict between paymaster's escort and robbers.
Sergeant John Denny	Under heavy fire, moved a wounded comrade to safety.
Private Pompey Factor* **	Participated in charge against 25 hostiles during scouting patrol.
Corporal Clinton Greaves	Joined a small detachment aiming to persuade renegade Apache Indians to surrender. The group was surrounded. In the midst of hand-to-hand fighting, Cpl. Greaves managed to shoot and bash a gap through the swarming Apaches, allowing his companions to break free.
Sergeant Henry Johnson	Volunteered to exit fortified shelter under heavy fire at close range to instruct guards. Then fought his way to the creek and back to bring water to the wounded.
Sergeant George Jordan	Led a detachment of 25 men at Fort Tularosa, N. Mex., repulsing a force of more than 100 Indians. At Carrizo Canyon, N . Mex., he commanded the right of a detachment of 19 men, holding ground against superior numbers.
Corporal Isaiah Mays	Displayed gallantry in fight between paymaster's escort and robbers. Walked and crawled two miles to a ranch for help.
Sergeant William McBryar	Distinguished for coolness, bravery and marksmanship in pursuit of hostile Apache Indians.
Private Adam Paine* **	Proved to be an invaluable soldier during engagement with the 4th U.S. Cavalry.
Isaac Payne* * (Trumpeter)**	As a trumpeter with three other men, he participated in a charge against 25 hostiles while on a scouting patrol.
Sergeant Thomas Shaw	From an exposed position, held his ground and forced the enemy back. His actions stopped the enemy's superior numbers from surrounding the command.
Sergeant Emanuel Stance	Displayed gallantry while scouting Indians.
Sergeant Charles Thomas	Carried a message through hostile Indian territory, and saved the life of a comrade en route.
Private Augustus Walley	Displayed bravery during action with hostile Apaches.
Sergeant John Ward* **	Fought bravely despite being severely wounded.
Sergeant Moses Williams	Rallied a detachment. Stood by his commanding officer in an exposed position under heavy fire from a large party of Indians, saving the lives of at least three comrades.
Corporal William Othello Wilson	Bravely carried a message asking for assistance through enemy territory.
Sergeant Brent Woods	Saved the lives of comrades and citizens of a detachment.

****Double Recipient*

https://www.cmohs.org/news-events/history/the-indian-campaigns-honoring-african-american-heroes/

https://www.yocumblackhistory.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/PPT-Buffalo-Soldiers-Medal-of-Honor-Recipients.pdf

Buffalo Soldiers in New Mexico

PBS – Moments in time. See Video.

Members of the Buffalo Soldiers Society of New Mexico share insights into the history of the Buffalo soldiers and how they contributed to New Mexico achieving statehood in 1912. They tell us of the challenges these soldiers faced, their hard work, and particularly of their bravery during the battle with Apache Chief Victorio at Massacre Canyon.

https://portal.knme.org/video/moments-time-buffalo-soldiers-new-mexico/

https://www.newmexicopbs.org/

1898 - 1918

- After most of the Indian Wars ended in the 1890s, the regiments continued to serve and participated in the 1898 Spanish–American War (including the Battle of San Juan Hill) in Cuba, where five more Medals of Honor were earned.
- The men of the Buffalo Soldiers were the only African Americans that fought during the war. Up to 5,000 "Black men" enlisted in volunteer regiments in the Spanish–American War. Several African-American regiments of United States Volunteers were formed and nicknamed "Immune Regiments", but none of these volunteer regiments served overseas in that war.
- The Buffalo Soldiers regiments also took part in the Philippine–American War from 1899 to 1903 and the 1916 Mexican Expedition. In 1918, the 10th Cavalry fought at the Battle of Ambos Nogales during the First World War, where they assisted in forcing the surrender of the federal Mexican and Mexican militia forces.
- Buffalo soldiers fought in the last engagement of the Indian Wars, the small Battle of Bear Valley in southern Arizona which occurred in 1918 between U.S. cavalry and Yaqui natives.

https://www.wikipedia.org/

WW1

The Buffalo Soldiers did not participate with the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) during World War I, but experienced noncommissioned officers were provided to other segregated Black units for combat service—such as the 317th Engineer Battalion. The soldiers of the 92nd and the 93rd infantry divisions were the first Americans to fight in France. The four regiments of the 93rd fought under French command for the duration of the war.

Behind closed doors, politicians and high-ranking military officers dispatched the Buffalo Soldiers to inconvenient locations in Central US and the Pacific.

The 9th Cavalry were already dispatched in the Philippines, the 10th Cavalry was patrolling the U.S. & Mexico border, the 24th Infantry was also on the Mexico border and the 25th infantry was stationed in Hawaii. None of the regular Army Buffalo Soldier regiments ever saw duty with the AEF in France during WWI.

As hard as those in power fought to prevent African Americans from serving in any major capacity during the war, the demand for manpower quickly demonstrated to all that in order to defeat the Axis, more men would be needed regardless of their color. While the regular Army Buffalo Soldiers were exiled away from WWI action, the National Army would eventually have to conscript tens of thousands of additional African Americans to join the fight for democracy in the Great War.

https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-buffalo-soldiers-in-wwi.htm

WW2

Prior to World War II, the black 25th Infantry Regiment was based at Ft Huachuca. During the war, Ft Huachuca served as the home base of the Black 92nd and 93rd Infantry Divisions. The 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiments were essentially disbanded and the soldiers were moved into service-oriented units, along with the entire 2nd Cavalry Division. The 92nd Infantry Division, the "Buffalo Division", served in combat during the Italian campaign. The 93rd Infantry Division—including the 25th Infantry Regiment—served in the Pacific theater. Separately, independent Black artillery, tank and tank destroyer battalions, as well as quartermaster and support battalions served in World War II. All of these units to a degree carried on the traditions of the Buffalo Soldiers.

Despite some official resistance and administrative barriers, Black airmen were trained and played a part in the air war in Europe, gaining a reputation for skill and bravery (see Tuskegee Airmen). In early 1945, after the Battle of the Bulge, American forces in Europe experienced a shortage of combat troops, so the embargo on using black soldiers in combat units was relaxed. The American Military History[1] says:

> "Faced with a shortage of infantry replacements during the enemy's counteroffensive, General Eisenhower offered Negro soldiers in service units an opportunity to volunteer for duty with the infantry. More than 4,500 responded, many taking reductions in grade in order to meet specified requirements. The 6th Army Group formed these men into provisional companies, while the 12th Army Group employed them as an additional platoon in existing rifle companies. The excellent record established by these volunteers, particularly those serving as platoons, presaged major postwar changes in the traditional approach to employing African-American troops."

1. Page 161 American Military History, Vol 2
https://history.army.mil/html/books/030/30-22/index.html

Korea

The 24th Infantry Regiment saw combat during the Korean War and was the last segregated regiment to engage in combat. The 24th was deactivated in 1951, and its soldiers were integrated into other units in Korea. On December 12, 1951, the last Buffalo Soldier units, the 27th Cavalry and the 28th (Horse) Cavalry, were disbanded. The 28th Cavalry was inactivated at Assi-Okba, Algeria, in April 1944 in North Africa, and marked the end of the regiment.

Monuments to the Buffalo Soldiers are in Kansas at Fort Leavenworth and Junction City. Then-Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Colin Powell, who initiated the project to get a statue to honor the Buffalo Soldiers when he was posted as a brigadier general to Fort Leavenworth, was guest speaker for the unveiling of the Fort Leavenworth monument in July 1992.

Military Resources and other References:

- **New Mexico History.org**
- (https://newmexicohistory.org/?s=Buffalo+Soldiers) A brief description of the Buffalo Soldier's history in New Mexico.
- **The Buffalo Soldiers & Indian Wars** (http://www.buffalosoldier.net/)
- **Wikipedia [Buffalo Soldiers]** (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Buffalo_Soldier)
- **The Buffalo Soldier National Museum,** (http://www.buffalosoldiermuseum.com/) Web site contains a database of Buffalo Soldier's names who served. Not searchable but has over 44 pages of data containing names in alphabetical order, occupations, places of birth, dates, ages, enlistment place, and regiment served. **(Note: Currently the database is not available.)**

Buffalo Soldier Roster Lookup:

Surname	Given Name	Occupation	Place of Birth	Age	Date	Enlistment Place	Reg't	ROE ref.
Abbott	Westly	farmer	Culpepper Co, Virginia	22	11/7/1867	Washington, District of Columbia	10 Cav	65.022.0857
Abraham	Josiah	laborer	Mansfield, Ohio	21	8/5/1867	Chicago, Illinois	10 Cav	65.017.0653
Acre	Henry	laborer	Memphis, Tennessee	21	5/28/1867	Louisville, Kentucky	10 Cav	65.009.0357
Adams	Alexander	laborer	Mason Co, Kentucky	25	9/17/1866	St Louis	10 Cav	62.015.0589
Adams	Alexander	laborer	Anne Arundel Co, Maryland	22	12/3/1867	Washington, District of Columbia	10 Cav	65.023.0891

Military Resources and other References:

New Mexico's Buffalo Soldiers 1866-1900 by Monroe Lee Billington
Imprint: University Press of Colorado

https://upcolorado.com/university-press-of-colorado/item/1702-new-mexico-s-buffalo-soldiers

Buffalo Soldiers and Fort Stanton: Helping Tame the Wild West
https://www.newmexicoculture.org/release/1631/25

University of New Mexico Digital Collections (Photographs)
https://econtent.unm.edu/digital/collection/Buffalo/search

Partial Roster of Buffalo Soldiers who served in New Mexico.
https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nma/Military/buffalo_soldiers.htm
https://sites.rootsweb.com/~nma/Military/buffalo_soldiersftbayard.htm

National Park Service
https://www.nps.gov/subjects/buffalosoldiers/regiments.htm

Military Resources and other References:

National Archives:
https://www.archives.gov/files/research/african-americans/buffalo-soldiers.pdf

History
https://www.history.com/topics/19th-century/buffalo-soldiers#sources

Spanish-American War
https://www.spanamwar.com/10thcav.htm

Formation of the 9th and 10th Calvary documents
https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA241171.pdf
https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA229157.pdf

Formation of the 24th Infantry Regiment
https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA272926.pdf

Buffalo Soldiers WW1
https://www.nps.gov/articles/the-buffalo-soldiers-in-wwi.htm